

# News Release



## Southwest Pacific Region

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### **USFWS Will Truck and Release Almost 4 million Chinook Salmon Smolts into San Pablo Bay Beginning Tuesday**

Sacramento – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced today it will continue with its 2 ½-month drought contingency plan with the trucking and release of almost 4 million salmon smolts from the Coleman National Fish Hatchery to the Mare Island area of San Pablo Bay.

Trucking will begin on Tuesday from Coleman NFH and is scheduled to continue with the release of about 780,000 fish every day through Saturday. The USFWS began on March 24 a temporary contingency plan in conjunction with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the National Marine Fisheries Service that calls for the release of its 12 million hatchery smolts in 2014 due to extreme drought conditions.

Coleman NFH typically releases annually all of its fall Chinook smolts into Battle Creek, a tributary of the Sacramento River, allowing them to complete the imprinting cycle during their outmigration to the ocean. A continuing severe drought in the Central Valley of California, however, has produced conditions in the Sacramento River and Delta that may be detrimental to the survival of juvenile salmon. In response, the USFWS developed a set of triggers to be used to determine if an alternate release strategy would be necessary to avoid unacceptably high levels of juvenile fish mortality. That strategy involved trucking the smolts to sites closer to the ocean if any triggers were met as the smolts became ready for release. Last week, some triggers were met, paving the way for this week's trucking and release operation. Those triggers include the Delta Cross Channel Gates being open within 21 days of when the salmon smolts were ready to be released, high water temperatures, and low flows.

During the week of March 24, some triggers were met and the USFWS trucked about 2.5 million salmon smolts to Rio Vista for release. On April 4, however, rains the week before improved river and Delta conditions, resulting in none of the triggers for trucking being met, and USFWS released about 4.5 million onsite into Battle Creek, the USFWS' normal process. The decision to truck or release fish onsite is based on continual assessment and forecasts of environmental conditions.

Coleman National Fish Hatchery was constructed in 1942 as part of the mitigation measures to help preserve significant runs of Chinook salmon threatened by the loss of natural spawning areas resulting from the construction of Shasta and Keswick dams on the upper Sacramento River. Coleman NFH contributes up to 100,000 Chinook annually to the ocean fisheries as well as thousands of fish for the fisheries in the Sacramento River.

To access ongoing information on the trucking and release operation, including a map of hatcheries and release sites, photos, the CDFW and USFWS contingency plans, and past news releases, go to:

<http://www.fws.gov/sfbaydelta/>

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen,*

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